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AUTHOR Whyte, Barbara
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ABSTRACT

Recent refinements to the professional practice strand of one of the teacher training programs offered by the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand have integrated teaching related experiences into four compulsory courses that develop and extend key concepts and issues directly related to successful teaching practice in New Zealand. The four courses weave together to form a unified strand of the overall Bachelor of Education degree program so that theory and practice can be related together in a supported, meaningful and reflective manner by the trainees during their studies. The courses, offered in successive years through the four-year program, begin by introducing the principles and practices of learning and teaching in New Zealand primary schools; with an initial focus on management and planning. This leads onto consideration of how teachers take learning theories into account; and the relating of current learning theory, teaching and learning issues, and evaluation techniques and principles, to classroom practice. This in turn is followed by critical analysis of the issues surrounding educational development at the national level; and the factors which beginning teachers must take into account in the implementation and assessment of a classroom program. And finally, the themes developed through theory and practice in the profession are built into a case-study approach to the study, review and implementation of themes and innovations in New Zealand education; with main focus being on the principles and effects of the self-managing school. This paper will outline the essential features of the four courses and the way they successfully fit together to form a cohesive constituent of the whole degree. (Author)

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PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COURSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO: THE THEORETICAL COMPONENT

Barbara Whyte

School of Education, University of Waikato

Paper presented at the Australian Teacher Education Association Conference
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane, 3rd - 6th July, 1994.

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Professional Practice Courses at the University of Waikato: The Theoretical Component

Paper presented at the Australian Teacher Education Association Conference, July 1994, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

Barbara Whyte
Department of Professional Studies, School of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

Abstract

Recent refinements to the professional practice strand of one of the teacher training programmes offered by the university have integrated teaching related experiences into four compulsory courses that develop and extend key concepts and issues directly related to successful teaching practice in New Zealand. The four courses weave together to form a unified strand of the overall Bachelor of Education degree programme so that theory and practice can be related together in a supported, meaningful and reflective manner by the trainees during their studies.
The courses, offered in successive years through the four-year programme, begin by introducing the principles and practices of learning and teaching in New Zealand primary schools; with an initial focus on management and planning. This leads onto consideration of how teachers take learning theories into account; and the relating of current learning theory, teaching and learning issues, and evaluation techniques and principles, to classroom practice. This in turn is followed by critical analysis of the issues surrounding educational development at the national level; and the factors which beginning teachers must take into account in the implementation and assessment of a classroom programme. And finally, the themes developed through theory and practice in the profession are built into a case-study approach to the study, review and implementation of themes and innovations in New Zealand education; with main focus being on the principles and effects of the self-managing school. This paper will outline the essential features of the four courses and the way they successfully fit together to form a cohesive constituent of the whole degree.

The background and development of the current Univerity of Waikato, School of Education compulsory practicum-based courses have been presented in earlier papers by my colleagues who demonstrated that closing the theory-practice gap was seen as one of the more important aspects of the practicum, by teacher training facilitators; but that this was an often-cited area of teacher training programmes that required remedial attention (Calder, Faire & Schon, 1993; McGee, Oliver & Carstensen, 1994; Oliver, 1992; Ramsay & Battersby, 1988). In response, there have been recent refinements to our four professional practice courses, in an attempt to narrow this gap and assist trainees to appreciate and understand our belief that theory and practice inform each other. Completion of a successful teaching practice in the school setting is an essential component of all of the courses, and for continuation into the following year of the teacher training Degree/Diploma programme. An overview of the courses and how content dove-tails together through seven themes, can be seen on page 1 of the appendix.

Professional Practice I (Year 1): Advisor/tutors play a crucial role in the initial Professional Practice I course, which aims through a series of 'phases' to help and support novice trainees to gradually build up a reflective appreciation of a variety of approaches and strategies for effective teaching, learning and classroom management; so that by the end of the first year they are empowered to front up to their first sustained practicum with informed confidence. The attitude base and foundations for the theoretical concepts and issues elaborated during the following three courses are laid in the initial course and therefore it is necessary to outline the first year in detail in order to establish how the subsequent courses build upon each other.

Year one. February. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, the rooky trainees are clustered into tutorial groups of between 20-25 students and initiated into their new career by a tutorial group advisor who works alongside them as a mentor throughout their training, but who is also their Professional Practice I course tutor . Following a three-day period which allows for a brief getting-to-know-each-other, orientation to the institution, and introduction to a variety of skills-based modules (eg word-processing and how to teach swimming), the trainees are assigned in pairs to associate teachers in clusters of local city schools for two weeks of familiarisation with classroom life - and to confirm career choice! The advisors rotate amongst their allocated schools, supporting associate teachers and monitoring their group of teacher trainees as they progress through set tasks. During this time, the first phase of the Professional Practice I course, it is intended that the students will be helped to observe and interact with children (McMillan and Meade, 1985); and to reflect upon and discuss these experiences with their peers, lecturers and associate teachers (Holly & McLoughlin, 1989).

In the second phase, the trainees are introduced to the principles and practices of managing, planning and evaluating, with a combination of tutorials and Normal School shared unit-teaching experiences on the weekly in-schools day, scheduled for each group. The advisors supervise a partnership between sets of four trainees and a Normal School associate teacher by coordinating interactions that begin as focussed observations, lead on to collaborative planning between associate teacher and trainees, and result in trainees pair-teaching and evaluating

a unit of four lessons with half a class. Both advisor and associate teacher monitor and give constructive, quality feedback on all sessions to the trainees, who also similarly feedback to each other in pairs. The advantages are: that the associate teacher's expertise and experience is utilised in context, in a meaningful way; that the associate teachers have input into the unit planning and evaluation, therefore continuity of class programme can be maintained; and that the trainees feel they are contributing usefully to the childrens' learning and the classroom programme (avoiding the 'one-off-lesson' feeling of imposition and dispirit-ness) . The episodes also provide appropriate ground experience for the follow-on, research-based workshops covering various approaches to classroom management, planning and evaluation; during which the trainees draw on their recent experiences to analyse and deduce principles, and establish links to theory and research. Reflections and learning processes are cumulatively expressed in written form through the journal each trainee is encouraged to maintain.

After a studybreak 'reflection' period, the trainees expand into phase three by applying their knowledge from phase two into an indepth, cooperative planning, learning and teaching unit within the same classroom context as their earlier experience. Again the focus is on a collaborative approach to all aspects, but with the added dimension of each trainee having a turn to teach the whole class in a supported manner followed by quality feedback from staff and peers on organisation, management, activities and closure. Formative monitoring of all sessions culminates in each trainee receiving a written summative evaluation of progress, equally contributed to by associate teacher and advisor. Part of the role as an advisor, is to coordinate the tutorial group curriculum courses in-school-day timetable and liaise with the Normal Schools; where possible and appropriate, advisors attempt to coordinate Professional Practice I with curriculum-course content .

Collation of demonstrated trainee strengths and weaknesses noted in phase three forms part of the base for phase four, which attempts to help trainees increase their perception of children's learning, and explore effective ways of interacting with children to increase participation and facilitate thinking. Particular situations noted during phase three teaching sessions are utilised as examples of ways childrens ideas can be extended or inhibited, and alternatives are generated in workshop

sessions. Co-operative grouping, learning centres, and questionning and problem-solving techniques, are examined alongside the content and implications of the 1993 New Zealand *Curriculum Framework* document. During this phase, trainees also develop a professional portfolio which informally flows into the next phase, preparation for professional practice. Examination of the expectations and requirements for the practicum/teaching practice, identification of each trainee's own particular goals and the formulation of possible ways in which to address these goals, arises naturally from the reflective processes established earlier in the year and from analysis of course content.

Finally in November, the trainees enter the sixth and final phase of the first course; a four week block of professional practice alongside an associate teacher in a school of their choice. Each trainee receives 2 evaluative visits from a lecturer and as mentioned earlier by, must gain a 'pass' for this teaching block in order to complete requirements for the PP1 course and to continue in the teacher training programme. Reports for the trainee's official file are written by the associate teacher and the visiting lecturer.

Professional Practice II (Year 2): Trainees are not as constrained into the tutorial group boundaries and timetabling as they are in the first year and the role of the advisor has less significance in a guiding/teaching sense. Trainees attend a weekly one-hour principal lecture, and two-hour workperiod class which is made up of combinations of trainees from a variety of the original tutorial groups. Emphasis is placed on relating current learning theory, teaching and learning issues, and evaluation techniques and principles, to teaching practice.

The course is arranged into four 'blocks': learning and teaching; issues in learning and teaching; assessment and evaluation; and teaching practice. The first block attempts to help trainees develop further understanding of how children learn and the issues involved by showing; that different learning theories derive from different philosophies concerning human behaviour; that different theories about learning give rise to certain teacher behaviours intended to influence learning; that aquiring knowledge and understanding of conditions internal and external to the learner can assist or hinder the learning process; that the effect of the relationship between culture and learning needs to be considered; and that there is a wide

range of teaching methods and strategies that can be selected from when planning learning experiences, and these are based on teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching. The second block provides a range of options derived from the first block, from which one is selected for in-depth study. Some trainees have multi-interests and commit themselves to attending more than one option. Occasionally in blocks one and two, trainees spend time in schools observing or teaching as part of the PP2 course, but certainly not as intensely as in the first year.

The third block investigates the principles and practices of classroom assessment and evaluation techniques; including ways to organise and review attainment through observation, record keeping and portfolios; strategies for reporting and conducting assessment conferences with pupils and/or parents; and the differences between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced evaluation and between standardised and non-standardised tests. Teachers from Normal Schools are actively involved in contributing and tutoring this block, on-site, at the university. Related to this block, trainees work through a programmed-learning booklet in their own time, but with workshops available if needed, that develops skills in the use of statistical techniques for handling classroom assessment data for evaluation purposes. During Block four, a professional practice of six weeks duration in August-September, trainees consider the implications of the earlier blocks in curriculum implementation and apply this knowledge to their teaching.

Professional Practice III (Year 3): The by now, **not** so bright-eyed and bushy-tailed trainees are expected in the third year to be more critical and analytical of the issues surrounding educational development at the national and local levels. The role of education within the social, economic and political sphere of human society is examined on the understanding that the topics and issues studied in the course are problematical; in that there are no clear-cut answers, that they involve doubt, and may be interpreted from various perspectives. Trainees are expected to participate fully in debate and discussion and are requested to be prepared to reflect on and possibly modify, their own points of view.

Through a case-study approach, this course gives trainees an opportunity to: widen and clarify the concept of curriculum and the processes of its development at the national level; gain an understanding of the influence of social, economic and

political factors on the national curriculum; further develop their understanding of factors influencing the implementation of classroom programmes in primary schools; continue with a reflective approach to their own professional development and teaching practice; and gain greater awareness of issues facing beginning teachers as they move into the profession. The course also assists in the extension of proficiency in the planning, teaching and evaluation of classroom programmes, through the seven week teaching practice block in May-June.

Professional Practice IV (Year 4): 1994 is the inaugural year for the teaching of this 12 week course. Through the three themes of: the self-managing school, the teacher as researcher, and ethics and the professional; this course studies the theory on reflective practice and the literature on the teacher as researcher; the concepts and issues relating to the self-managing school; the concept of professionalism and how this relates to practice; and examines aspects of research into, and the practice of, teaching.

A focus is on action research and trainees are required to carry out and write a report on an investigation at a local primary school, amongst other assignments including critical analysis of case studies and literature.

It can be seen from what has been presented here, that by establishing a core foundation in the first year through a collaborative, supported combination of theory and practice; as the courses become progressively more theoretical in nature, it is intended that trainees should have sufficient grounding in transference of theory to practice and vice versa, to enable them to successfully make the links and *narrow the gap* during practicum in later years, and as a beginning teacher.

The challenges for our department now that we have come this far in trying to *narrow the gap*, are coming both at national and local level. At a national level, there is the reduction of funding to universities, development of 'unit standards' at a national level and changes to the curriculum through alterations to curriculum boundaries in the establishment of 'essential learning areas' - aspects that may well influence in our own School of Education and a pending re-vamp of the structure of the Bachelor of Education degree, the quantity of practicum that will be allowed to continue. It is to be hoped that these challenges will follow the

traditional *non-rapid* time-line for changes in education and allow a breathing space for the changes in our courses to prove their effectiveness - and perhaps then we will be able to persuade the purse-string holders that investment in an *integrated* practicum and theory does pay dividends.

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PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COURSES - STRANDS AND CONTENT

STRANDS	LEVEL 100 INTRO. TO TEACHING AND LEARNING	LEVEL 200 CURRENT THEORIES, PRACTICES AND ISSUES	LEVEL 200/300 ISSUES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING	LEVEL 300 INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING
REFLECTION	Journals about professional development begin portfolio. Self-assessment.	Continuation of portfolio devt. Personal teaching profile Assessmenrt and evalution	Continuation of portfolio devt. Teaching profile extended	Portfolio continues and C.V. Teaching profile extended
LEARNING AND TEACHING	Motivating learning Questioning Independent learning Introduction to assessment and evaluation Classroom management Lesson/unit planning	Motivation theories Current learning theories Teaching strategies Issues in assessment Classroom assessment and evaluation	Concept of curriculum Who owns the curriculum Teacher effectiveness	Action research in curriculum issues Successful schools
BICULTURALISM	Practical examples of Maori language and culture in schools	Culture and learning Issues of culture in assessment and evaluation	Cultural considerations in curriculum development	Life chances - effect of race
EQUITY	Terminology Sexist language	Teaching strategies that maximise learning opportunities for all learners	Gender issues	Education as reproduction or transformation
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION	Meeting with parents	Reporting to parents/caregivers	Involving community in curriculum design and school policy	
TEACHING PRACTICE	Planning, teaching and evaluation with groups. 6 weeks	Planning, teaching and evaluation with groups and classes. 5 weeks	Planning, teaching and evaluation in whole class situations. Meeting individual needs. 8 weeks	Planning ,teaching and evaluation. Conversations with parents about pupil progress and learning. ?weeks
PROFESSIONALISM	Confidentiality Dress Punctuality	Confidentiality in information gathering, record keeping	Professional organizations Rights and responsibilities	Ethics Teachers and the law

APPENDIX 1

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What can we do to prevent the Global warming?

↑

SCIENCE. GREEN house EFFECT. (Application of G.H.E)

REFLECTION

As a teacher I found I was challenged quite a lot in this lesson. One girl became very confused. She could not understand the G.H.E. as she did not know where the carbondioxide and build up of gases came from. This showed me the different learning patterns of children. I was teaching the opposite way to which she could understand and learn. I have only just realised this as I am typing now. I wish I had realised this during the lesson. It was easier for her to know the causes before the G.H.E.. I should have made the connection between the 'burning question' activity a lot clearer than I had, by doing this I could have lessened the confusion. I was able to help her understand by talking about some of the causes with the group but then had to relate it back to the G.H.E. so she could understand the G.H.E..

(ACTIVITY) → children cut out pictures of things which contribute to G.H.E.

We discussed each picture the children cut out during the magazine activity. I was surprised at some of the things they had cut out. One cut out a cigarette which I hadn't considered. I was pleased that she did as smoking is something we want to discourage children from doing. → Not just teaching science. Lifestyle teaching comes into all areas of the curriculum.

The scenario did not work as well as I would have liked it to. Ideas about the effects on the world did not flow very well. I tried to ask questions like, "What do you think will happen to ice burgs?" or "What do you think would happen to animals who like the cold?". This did not work very well so I decided to skip effects on New Zealand and go straight to the effects on them. They did not think that a 1.5° change in temperature would effect them very much. I explained to them that I chose only a 1.5° change because I wanted it to be realistic. We decided to change it to a 7° rise so this would help them grasp the idea however I did explain that it would be a gradual change. They said that they understand. → I learnt to be flexible. If the activity is not working, then don't do it!!

The children enjoyed doing the poster activity. I only gave them a small piece of paper incase I didn't have time to do it. The children came up with achievable goals or things they could do to help prevent the build up of gases in the air. Like recycling plastics and not burning. I'm not sure that I finished my lesson off well. The children finished their poster and then it was time for the bell to go. While they were doing their posters I read out the questions they asked during the last lesson. They were able to answer all of them.

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